

Survivor, Greece

Sein Ahn as Aristotle Jones
Jim Chisholm as Aristarchus Johnson
Brian Wilhite as Ptolemy Thompson
Everyone else as The Chorus

[Background: Cheesy Greek Music]

[Rocky will say that Professor Aristotle will be a guest lecturer in order to convince the class that Earth is stationary. Rocky also says that in keeping with Greek academic tradition, Professor Aristotle will be assisted by a Greek chorus. The chorus lines up by the blackboard. Then Rocky introduces Professor Aristotle, who enters from the back of the room.]

ARISTOTLE: Hello class. I am the great Professor Aristotle Jones. I will explain to you, on the basis of pure reason, why Earth must be stationary.

[Enter Aristarchus from the back of the room.]

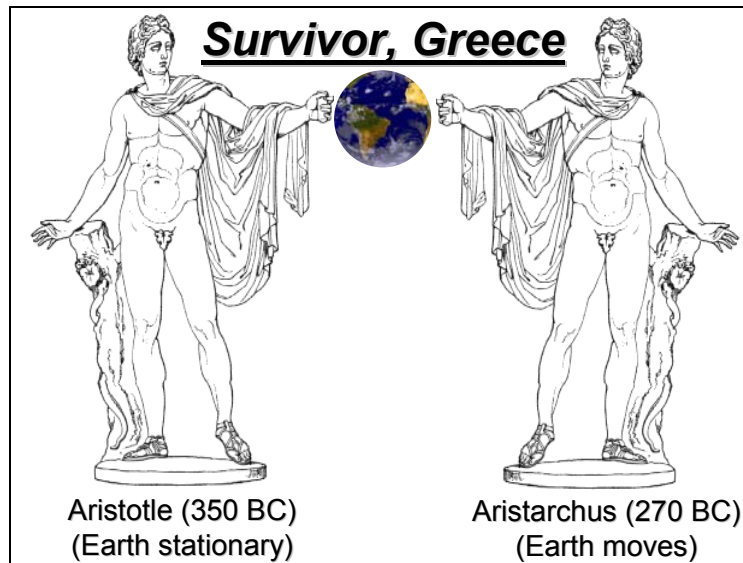
ARISTARCHUS: Professor Aristotle! Professor Aristotle! I was wondering if I could have a word with you about this new theory that I...

ARISTOTLE: What? What is it? Who are you?

ARISTARCHUS: I am Aristarchus Johnson sir, a, um, lowly, grad student in your Academy.

CHORUS: We present A (short) Greek Tragedy
 Behold the lowly grad student,
 and the esteemed professor.
 Locked together in an academic struggle!

[Rocky projects Survivor, Greece slide]



ARISTOTLE: Oh I see, a graduate student, someone at the bottom of the academic food chain. Very well Aristarchus, but make it quick. As you well know, I am a highly esteemed professor, with tenure, at this academy and my time is very important. I have committee meetings to attend and lunch reservations at the Quad Club!

CHORUS: Don't be so quick, old one.
Your graying beard and shiny head
do not guarantee wisdom.

ARISTARCHUS: Oh thank you sir. I promise I'll be quick. You see, sir, I was reading through your very important and influential book "On The Heavens"...

ARISTOTLE: Ah yes. That was a best seller.

ARISTARCHUS: ... and you see sir, um, well, I think you're quite wrong about Earth being at the center...

ARISTOTLE: What?! You must be raving. Logic dictates, of course, that earthly substances move naturally to the center of the universe, and therefore Earth itself must be at the center. Any fool knows that.

CHORUS: We smell certain hubris here.
Pride that comes before the fall,
although in your case, many centuries before the fall.

ARISTARCHUS: Well, be that as it may, sir. There is this little problem of the motion of Mars. You claim in this book that the motion of the spheres is by logic, perfect and ordered...

ARISTOTLE: Of course you upstart. The universe can be understood on the basis of pure reason and thought!

ARISTARCHUS: ... but when we turn our eyes upward to the night sky we can see that the planet Mars, god of war, wanders across the night sky, sometimes eastward, sometimes westward. And I just don't see how your theory can account for that?

ARISTOTLE: Ah yes, I suppose that is a troubling observation...

ARISTARCHUS: However! If we simply put the *Sun* at the center of our system, all of our troubles drop away.

ARISTOTLE: As amusing and entertaining that youthful crackpots can be, young lad, I am sorry to tell you that your theory is just plain old nonsense. Someday when you achieve the wisdom known as "tenure" you will understand these things...

ARISTARCHUS: But!!!! It agrees with the observations of the Babylonians!!!! Look, I can show you how it works!

[Aristarchus starts drawing the goofy diagram on the blackboard.]

ARISTOTLE: Oh puh-lease, why should I even be listening to you, you haven't even been born yet. To place the Sun at the center is simply ... obscene, an affront to all rationality. Just think - look around, the earth doesn't seem to be moving, now does it? So how could it possibly be orbiting about the Sun?

ARISTARCHUS: It matters not whether we feel it moving or not! What we need to do is account for what we observe, and a Sun centered model does this naturally and beautifully! Besides, can you think of a better place to put the sun, that most wonderful lamp?

ARISTOTLE: Inconceivable!!!

CHORUS: We do not think that word means what you think it means.

ARISTOTLE: Aristarchus... Even if your model fits the data, your model goes against the god-given metaphysical fact that WE are the center of everything! Your theory is easily dismissible in purely aesthetic grounds! Still... this Mars thing *is* disturbing!

[Ptolemy runs in from the back of the room.]

PTOLEMY: Eureka as my friend Archimedes would say! I have figured it out!!!! The Earth *is* at the center of the Universe. All you have to do is introduce a few hypotheses.

[**PTOLEMY** begins shouting excitedly about deferents and epicycles]

ARISTOTLE & ARISTARCHUS: Who the hell are you?

PTOLEMY: I am Pah-tolemy! I mean, (P)tolemy. I have a silent "P."

ARISTARCHUS: [to audience:] There was supposed to be a "P" joke here, but the FCC threatened to fine the University for profanity.

ARISTOTLE: You are Ptolemy, the famed Greek general and later Egyptian Pharaoh?

PTOLEMY: No, wrong Ptolemy. I am Ptolemy Thompson, sometimes called Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria from the second century A.D. -- but my friends call just me Ptolemy, or sometimes just Claude.

ARISTARCHUS: [aside to Aristotle] That guy has friends?

PTOLEMY: [ignoring that] And *this* is my book ... the *Almagest* -- the Greatest! [drops books on table, then starts drawing excitedly on blackboard while speaking] In these volumes I have worked out the complete mechanization of the heavenly spheres. I can account for the wandering of Mars; I can account for every observation of the Babylonians. I can even predict the rising and setting of the planets far into the future. (Now, in Book One I start with...)

ARISTARCHUS: So this is your data, hmmm, this looks a little bit strange.

PTOLEMY: What are you saying?! I didn't fudge anything, I swear! Heh heh heh.

ARISTOTLE: [quickly cutting in] Well, there you have it my dear Aristarchus: a grand, and elegant, confirmation that the Earth does indeed sit in the center of the Universe...

PTOLEMY: Well, not exactly the center, you see there are these equants...

[Aristotle ignores him...]

ARISTOTLE: ... as I was saying, the correct logical order of things is confirmed by the very data which you hold so dear.

ARISTARCHUS: But it's so complicated!

PTOLEMY: Don't be troubled, Aristarchus -- remember that as earthly creatures we are imperfect, and what we perceive as complex may be simple in the heavens. (And, we are unable to perceive heavenly things.)

CHORUS: This is all well,
But as a tragedy someone must perish,
else this would be a comedy
and there is nothing funny here.

ARISTOTLE: I will destroy this troublemaker by causing a wardrobe malfunction!

[Aristotle pulls on the toga of Aristarchus, exposing a gold star on a nipple.]

ARISTARCHUS: Oh no, I am ruined! I will never get my Ph.D. I am dead Horatio! [Aristarchus dead to ground]

[Kurt kills the lights and plays "I feel the Earth move." The lights come back up after a few seconds, and the cast bows.]

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A
Rocky Kolb-GnatSigh
Production



Original play (2002)
Eduardo Rozo
Timothy Donaghy
Jim Chisholm

Adapted (2004)
Rocky Kolb

Featuring the "Not Ready for Class Time Players":

Aristotle Jones:
Aristarchus Johnson:
Ptolemy Thompson:
Chorus:

Sein Ahn
Jim Chisholm
Brian Wilhite
Justin Johnson
Vasileios Paschalidis
Anibal Medina
Kurt Henrikson
Don M. Randel
Richard Saller

Lighting & Music:
Best Boy:
Key Grip:

Neither animals nor graduate students were harmed in this production!